

Clap Trap

Handclap Synthesizer



by Bob Saydlowski, Jr.

Multi-tracked handclaps have been used for percussive backing on many records. Trying to produce the same effect in live performance is impossible, unless you are the proud owner of the phenomenal *Clap Trap*.

Designed and manufactured in England, *Clap Trap's* express purpose is to synthesize accurate handclap effects. The device can simulate a single person, or a whole group. *Clap Trap* is a black metal box measuring 10" x 5 1/2" x 3 1/2" having six rotary controls and two slider posts on its face panel. The handclaps can be cued manually by a trigger button on the box, by an automatic trigger button, or by external sources.

The "Ensemble Clap" section of *Clap Trap* has two rotary knobs, that produce the individual 'claps'. The "Spread" knob varies the *togetherness* of the handclaps from very tight to a ragged clap. Pitch of the clap is adjustable from high, to a low-pitched foot stomp. The "Hiss" section provides the 'crash' sound, using white noise. Its pitch and decay are also adjustable. A balance slider next to these sections enables the Clap and Hiss sounds to be mixed together: just the claps, just the crash, or a little of both. I've found that the Hiss by itself is very good for enhancing a snare drum sound, by adding a bit of the white noise to 'lengthen' it. The handclap effect is unbelievable, more like a recorded sound than a live one.

A manual trigger pushbutton is mounted on the *Clap Trap* box. This button has a tiny light in it, which flashes when it's depressed. There is also a trigger button for the Auto Speed, also with a light. The Auto Speed control produces steady, continuous metronomic handclaps through an internal clock, varied in speed by a low-frequency oscillator. The fastest setting on Automatic gives ap-

proximately 5 claps per second. At the 8 o'clock position (its slowest), it seems to give no claps at all. Boosting it up to the 9 o'clock mark produces one per minute. The trigger button starts and stops the Auto function. There is a light below the control knob flashing each cycle of the LFO. Pressing the Auto trigger while it is still lit causes the first clap to be out of time, but this can be remedied by paying attention to the light.

The rear panel of *Clap Trap* has five jacks for output and external triggering of the handclaps. "Audio Out" is for connection to a P.A., amplifier, or studio direct box. The "Foot" input allows triggering of *Clap Trap* by an optional foot pedal. The "Synth" jack will accept the gate or control signals from other synthesizers or sequencers to trigger the effect. "Audio" enables a microphone or pickup to be plugged in. Ideal triggering here would be from a snare drum, bass drum, hi-hat; even a guitar or piano. *Clap Trap* will also trigger nicely off a pre-recorded drum track or click track via the studio's patch bay. The Audio Trigger Level control on the face of the unit adjusts sensitivity for minimum or maximum signal input when using external sources. The LFO Cancel jack allows foot switch activation of the Auto Speed.

There is a level slider on the unit for volume control and a rocker on/off switch with a Mains On light signal. *Clap Trap* is AC-powered (converted for American voltage), and has a one-year full guarantee.

Clap Trap's face is designed clearly, utilizing white graphics and sensible location of controls. In live application, I found it best to use a hi-impedance microphone pointed at the snare drum and connected with the Audio Trigger jack with the *Clap Trap* itself being run

through the P.A. or a guitar amp. Setting the trigger level near minimum produced handclaps on the strong beats only, in perfect sync with the natural snare drum sound. Adding reverb "opened up" the effect a bit, resulting in a great, definite handclap sound. There is also a pickup available for attachment to your snare, bass drum, or whatever, instead of using a mike. If you opt for the foot switch triggering, only a momentary on/off will work best. Having a regular-type foot switch will cause you to have to tap eighth notes on the switch if you want quarter-note handclaps, since that type of switch turns on with one tap, off with another.

I predict *Clap Trap* to take recording studios by storm since, 1.) it's easier than having to hire 10 people just to clap hands, and, 2.) can be injected anytime during the recording process. *Clap Trap* is very easily triggered in sync with pre-recorded tracks, and with adjustments in EQ, can sound anywhere from crickets and castanets, to handclaps to footstomps. Its "Hiss" section allows some very interesting percussive effects, also.

I have nothing but praise for *Clap Trap* and its inventor, Dave Simmons. *Clap Trap* is an absolute time and manpower saver in the studio. In live performance, it adds 'Pizzazz' to any rhythm section, with dazzling authenticity. I can see its use in many a musical situation. 10CC, Yes, Status Quo and Jethro Tull are just a few of the current users.

Clap Trap is being made available to recording studios at a pro price of \$198.00 from Sano Corp. (317 Cox Street; Roselle, NJ 07203), but there is presently no dealer network or list price set up in the States. Sano will sell direct to the musician if need be.

